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EX-CIA AGENT HAS EYE ON SILJANDER'S SEAT
BY MARK FRITZ
BENTON HARBOR, MI

Most candidates for Congress are more than willing to recount the career moves that brought them to the threshold of political office.

Not Daniel Roche. Two decades of his past are off-limits to inquiries, a secret. Don't even ask. He took an oath.

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"I was a spy, that's about all I can say," said Roche.

But even an ex- CIA agent will talk about the souvenirs he's picked up during his clandestine career, most of it, he says, spent in Africa and Europe.

"I got that one in Uganda, from my counterpart in the KGB," he says, pointing to a wooden figurine on the fireplace mantle of his Benton Harbor home.

Roche, a Democrat, is seeking the 4th District seat being vacated by Republican Mark Siljander, who lost a primary battle to Fred Upton in August. The district covers the southwest corner of Michigan.

Roche says his 22 years with the CIA, followed by 13 years as a political science professor at Lake Michigan College, qualify him for his first stab at elective office.

But the 64-year-old retiree, a balding, gray-haired grandfather of five, has the unenviable task of getting elected in a district that hasn't sent a Democrat to Washington in 54 years.

He also faces Upton, a boyish former aide to ex-Budget Director David Stockman and scion of the family that founded what is now the Whirlpool Corp., the region's largest employer.

Roche said he received clearance from the CIA when he first considered elective office in 1973. He said his former employer is aware of his current campaign.

"They're a little antsy about it," he said. "They've called me twice already." An agency spokeswoman in Washington said it is CIA policy to neither confirm nor deny agency employment.

Roche describes himself as a conservative but opposes President Reagan's Star Wars missile defense system and military aid to rebels in Nicaragua.